

VZCZCXRO5074
PP RUEHDBU
DE RUEHAH #0669/01 1871337
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
P 061337Z JUL 07
FM AMEMBASSY ASHGABAT
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 8969
INFO RUCNCIS/CIS COLLECTIVE
RUEHLM/AMEMBASSY COLOMBO 0398
RUEHKA/AMEMBASSY DHAKA 0420
RUEHIL/AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD 2108
RUEHBUL/AMEMBASSY KABUL 0857
RUEHKT/AMEMBASSY KATHMANDU 0200
RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI 0905
RUEHCG/AMCONSUL CHENNAI 0113
RUEHKP/AMCONSUL KARACHI 0162
RUEHCI/AMCONSUL KOLKATA 0084
RUEHLH/AMCONSUL LAHORE 0098
RUEHBI/AMCONSUL MUMBAI 0123
RUEHPW/AMCONSUL PESHAWAR 0436
RHMFISS/CDR USCENTCOM MACDILL AFB FL
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHINGTON DC//DHO-2/REA/NMJIC-J2//
RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHINGTON DC//J5/RUE//
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHINGTON DC

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 ASHGABAT 000669

SIPDIS

SIPDIS

DEPT FOR SCA/CEN (SNELSIRE)

E.O. 12958: DECL: 07/06/2017

TAGS: [AF](#) [ENRG](#) [PINR](#) [PREL](#) [TX](#)
SUBJECT: KARZAI VISIT TO TURKMENISTAN: FOCUS ON
ELECTRICITY AND TRADE

REF: ASHGABAT 0660

ASHGABAT 00000669 001.2 OF 003

Classified By: Charge d'Affaires, a.i. Jennifer L. Brush for reasons 1.
4 (B) and (D).

Summary

1. (C) Electricity and trade reported dominated the agenda during Afghanistan President Hamid Karzai's July 5 meeting with Turkmenistan President Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedov. The latter reportedly agreed to sell additional electricity to Afghanistan, though there have been no indications as yet that the two actually agreed on energy prices. The chemistry between the two presidents was visibly good as the two carried on what appeared to be a friendly and intense conversation through a two-hour long state dinner ending the first day of Karzai's July 5-6 visit. Afghanistan's Ambassador Abdul Khaddam told Charge at the dinner he was very satisfied with the meeting results. Turkmenistan's press reported that Berdimuhamedov agreed to supply Afghanistan with \$300,000 worth of free electricity; Turkmenistan also agreed to construct a \$550,000 railway line in northern Afghanistan at its own expense, and Berdimuhamedov agreed to visit Afghanistan at an as-yet undetermined date. This meeting -- the follow-on to two earlier Karzai visits to Ashgabat for former President Niyazov's funeral and Berdimuhamedov's inauguration -- clearly augurs well for increased contacts between the two countries. End Summary.

Third Visit

2. (U) Although Karzai visited Turkmenistan both for former President Niyazov's December 2006 funeral and

Berdimuhamedov's February 2007 inauguration, this was his first state visit dedicated solely to bilateral relations. He was accompanied by an 27-person delegation that included his foreign and energy ministers. Amid tight security, Karzai met with President Berdimuhamedov and Foreign Affairs Deputy Chairman Rashit Meredov on July 5; the meetings were followed by a state dinner including the diplomatic corps and government representatives. On July 6, Karzai is scheduled to visit Turkmen State University, where he will be awarded an honorary professor title. Media coverage of President Karzai's meetings was front-page, extensive and glowing.

13. (C) Afghanistan's Ambassador Abdul Khaddam, who sat next to the Charge at the 90-minute state dinner, reported without details that the meetings went very, very well. There had been lots of talk about electricity, and the atmosphere between the two leaders had been very amiable. And, indeed, throughout the dinner Berdimuhamedov and Karzai were visibly friendly and comfortable with each other, speaking animatedly and laughing.

14. (U) According to Turkmenistan's state media, the two leaders signed a joint declaration, and their two foreign ministers signed a protocol on bilateral consultations, and agreements on transit shipments and trade-economic cooperation. Highlights include:

Political/Diplomatic

-- Berdimuhamedov accepted an invitation to visit Afghanistan;
-- Turkmenistan agreed to continue its support for Afghanistan's efforts to establish a peaceful and stable country;

ASHGABAT 00000669 002.2 OF 003

-- Afghanistan acknowledged Turkmenistan's neutral status as a factor for promoting peace and stability in Asia;
-- In their joint declaration, the two presidents expressed support for strengthening the UN's central role in promoting global security and sustainable development; and
-- The two foreign ministers agreed in the protocol to hold regular (at least once a year) talks and consultations at the foreign minister level.

Electricity

-- Turkmenistan agreed to increase its supply of electricity to Afghanistan (Comment: There was no indication in the media that the two presidents agreed on or even discussed a new price for the additional electricity -- see reftel for more on this issue. End Comment.); and
-- Turkmenistan committed to supply \$300,000 worth of electricity to Afghanistan free of charge.

Oil and Gas

-- President Karzai expressed a commitment to follow through on the Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India (TAPI) pipeline; and
-- Turkmenistan agreed to continue selling liquified natural gas (LNG) to Afghanistan at lower-than-market prices.

Railways

-- Turkmenistan agreed to repair the two kilometer-long Afghan segment of the Serhetabat-Turgundi rail line free of

charge to Afghanistan, at a cost of \$550,000; and

-- If Afghanistan develops its internal railway network, Turkmenistan will ensure that the Turkmenistan and Afghanistan rail systems could be linked along the Imamnazar-Andhoy line.

Trade/Economy

-- The two leaders agreed to create a joint intergovernmental commission on economic cooperation;

-- The two governments set in place a framework for transit shipments; and

-- The two governments agreed on a range of initiatives to promote trade and economic contacts.

Cultural

-- The two presidents agreed to promote exchanges of delegations and specialists in education and healthcare;

-- The two governments agreed to hold "culture days" in each other's countries and a Turkmen-Afghan festival; and

-- The two presidents agreed to increase science and sports exchanges.

Security

ASHGABAT 00000669 003.2 OF 003

-- The two presidents agreed to strengthen cooperation in the fight against weapons of mass destruction, terrorism, transnational crime and narcotics trafficking.

Other Agreements

-- The two sides agreed to work on agreements on consular issues, the opening of passenger air traffic between Ashgabat and Kabul, and passenger automobile traffic between the two countries (Comment: UAE Ambassador Al-Adhab told Charge at the dinner, his government was in negotiations with Turkmenistan to bring in Emirates Airlines to include Ashgabat-Dubai routes and possibly Ashgabat-Kabul routes) ; and

-- The two governments will work on an agreement to strengthen bilateral law enforcement cooperation.

Comment

15. (SBU) Among its neighbors, Turkmenistan's relations with Afghanistan have been the least troubled by excess baggage. The ethnic ties between the two countries have been close, and lack the veneer of threat that continue to color Turkmenistan's relations with Uzbekistan and Iran. Turkmenistan's generous assistance to its southern neighbor also reflects the government's recognition that continued instability in Afghanistan benefits nobody, least of all Turkmenistan itself.

16. (C) That said, the chemistry between the two leaders seems to be genuinely good -- Berdimuhamedov appeared far more comfortable with Karzai than with Putin, for example, where he seemed visibly nervous. At a time when Berdimuhamedov is making a concerted effort to reach out to his neighbors, this visit, at least, was one of the easiest, and augurs well for the continued improvement of cooperation between the two countries.

17. (C) Embassy is unlikely to obtain a readout on the visit from the Government of Turkmenistan and instead will rely on the Afghanistan Embassy for further details. Any additional feedback from the Karzai delegation, including impressions of Berdimuhamedov himself, would be greatly appreciated. End Comment.
BRUSH